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SUBJECT: NATIONAL WAR COLLEGE FIELD STUDY IN MOROCCO

REF: A. USNATO 00258

- [1](#)B. RABAT 00024
- [1](#)C. 05 RABAT 02227
- [1](#)D. RABAT 00918

[1](#)1. (U) This cable is sensitive but unclassified. Please protect accordingly.

[1](#)2. (SBU) SUMMARY: A delegation of National War College (NWC) students and faculty, led by Commandant Major General Teresa Marne Peterson and Deputy Commandant Ambassador Marcelle Wahba, visited Morocco May 13-18, 2006 as part of their Field Studies in National Security program. The group met with officials from the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, including Director General of Bilateral Affairs Youssef Amrani, selected parliamentarians, and member of the former Equity and Reconciliation Commission (IER), Abdelhay Moudden. The delegation's discussion with MFA officials centered on the Western Sahara, NATO participation, terrorism, broader Middle East issues, and reform. Amrani stressed Morocco's autonomy plan will be "inclusive, democratic, and efficient and in line with King Mohamed VI's vision." The group also enjoyed an open and frank dialogue with parliamentarians on the IER, parliament's interaction with constituents, and the 2007 parliamentary elections. Several parliamentarians also shared their concerns regarding U.S. involvement in Iraq, U.S. positions on Palestine, and U.S. views on the Western Sahara. Moudden, on the other hand, stressed the need for the implementation of the IER's recommendations, including judicial reform. END SUMMARY.

Ministry of Foreign Affairs Reviews Key Issues

[1](#)3. (SBU) On May 15, the NWC delegation met with MFA Director General of Bilateral Affairs Youssef Amrani and MFA Director of American Affairs Salaheddine Tazi to review and gain a greater understanding of Morocco's reform efforts to date and plans for the future. Amrani highlighted the GOM's position on several key issues, including the Western Sahara, NATO involvement, terrorism, Middle East Peace Process, and Iran. Commenting on the Western Sahara, Amrani noted the ongoing internal consultations and discussion on Morocco's autonomy proposal, stressing that Morocco's autonomy plan will be "inclusive, democratic, and efficient and in line with King Mohamed VI's vision." Changing to another topic, Amrani explained that Morocco is committed to NATO and has always shown interest in having a constructive cooperation with members, noting that Rabat's decision to host last month's North Atlantic Council (NAC) meeting demonstrated

Morocco's will and level of engagement (reftel a). On terrorism, Amrani said Morocco has and always will condemn fanaticism and extremism. He added that Morocco is very much concerned by this "global threat" and is taking steps to combat different sources of support to terrorism, to include working on a new law against money laundering.

¶4. (SBU) Turning to other issues, Amrani noted that Morocco has always been very active in the search for peace between Israel and Palestine. While acknowledging US concerns with the current HAMAS leadership, Amrani said "we have to give peace a chance in the region." The more than one million Israeli Jews of Moroccan descent gives Morocco a "special connection" to this region, Amrani explained. Shifting to Morocco's views towards Iran, Amrani said the GOM shares many of the U.S.'s concerns and that Morocco would like the international community to aim for a diplomatic and mutually agreed upon solution with respect to Iran. Underscoring that Morocco does not want Iran to become a "nuclear power" in the region, Amrani warned against a military solution because it could be "devastating."

¶5. (SBU) Amrani explained that the subject of reform is a continuous debate for Morocco, with several segments of society having different views on the topic. Amrani noted that because of King Mohamed VI's courage Morocco has been able to realize progress on several fronts, such as the law on political parties, the family code, and the IER. He, explained, however, that there is still work to be done and the "new priority" is human development, through the King's National Initiative for Human Development (INDH). Morocco cannot have a strong country without the human dimension, he said. He underlined Morocco's commitment to continuing its reforms from within, at its own pace, and according to its own specificity. Amrani closed the meeting by adding, "Morocco does not want to be a model, Morocco wants to be modest."

Exchange Of Views With Parliamentarians

¶6. (SBU) The delegation met May 16 with a select group of women members of parliament (MPs). The women MPs included Khadija Belaftouh, Constitutional Union (UC) MP and president of the lower chamber's Foreign Affairs and Defense Commission; Amina Ismaili Idrissi, Popular Movement Union (UMP) MP; Jamila El Mossalli, Party for Justice and Development (PJD) MP; Rachida Benmessaoud, Socialist Union of Populist Forces (USFP) MP; and Zohra Chagaf, Popular Movement Union (UMP) MP. While all MPs uniformly relayed thanks to the NWC for their visit to Morocco and the high level of US-Morocco bilateral relations, several of the MPs expressed concern about US involvement and violations of human rights in Iraq and urged the US to support Morocco's claims to the Western Sahara. Mossalli explained that Moroccans look at the United States with a great deal of admiration, but are concerned about US foreign policy. She noted that there is a distinction in the minds of most Moroccans between the "US administration" and the "US people." Benmessaoud highlighted the "standing problem of the Western Sahara" and claimed this issue concerns all Moroccans. Noting Morocco's "historic legitimacy," she hoped the US would support Morocco's position.

¶7. (SBU) Following their discussion with women MPs, the group met with Socialist Union of Popular Forces (USFP) lower chamber caucus leader Driss Lachgar, PJD MP and lower chamber Vice President Lahcen Daoudi, Istiqlal MP Tayieb Masbahi, and National Rally of Independents (RNI) MP and president of the lower chamber's Productive Sectors Commission Moulay El Bashir Badalla. The delegation enjoyed a frank and open discussion covering a broad range of issues, such as the Equity and Reconciliation Commission (IER), parliamentarians' interactions with their constituents, the future of privatization, and the 2007 legislative elections. Lachgar noted that the IER and its recommendations were the result of a long struggle. He added that the road to democracy will follow the same path, i.e. democracy will be a long struggle

for Morocco. Masbahi argued that Moroccan parliamentarians play the same role as other parliamentarians do across the world. He explained that in addition to being asked to respond to local issues, his constituents have repeatedly asked him what the US position is on the Western Sahara and Palestine. (NOTE: Masbahi's comment was likely meant to draw out a response from the delegation, rather than relaying actual concerns from his local constituents. END NOTE.) On privatization, Masbahi said Morocco is in the process of making industries more competitive. He also commented that Morocco is trying to turn once considered "useless" parts of Morocco into "useful" parts of Morocco. Masbahi added that Morocco looks to the US for help in learning more about the American market. Several of the MPs agreed that as a result of the law on political parties and potential alliances in the run up to the 2007 legislative elections, there will only be 5 or 6 political parties left standing after the 2007 elections.

Views On Morocco's Truth Commission

¶8. (SBU) The NWC delegation met on May 16 with Abdelhay Moudden to discuss the Equity and Reconciliation Commission (IER). Moudden served on the seventeen-member royally mandated commission throughout its existence (reftels b and c). Like other former IER members, Moudden travels to other countries to discuss IER process, findings, and recommendations. With the NWC delegation, he stressed the need for the implementation of the IER's recommendations, including judicial reform which will lead to separation of the judicial branch of the GOM from the executive and legislative branches and necessitate constitutional reform (reftel d). The political parties, according to Moudden, are willing and capable of acting on the IER's recommendations through the parliament. He pointed out that the parliament is currently working on a bill to propose that the prime minister be accountable to the parliament. (NOTE: In order for this to happen, constitutional change must first take place. END NOTE.)

¶9. (SBU) The NWC asked whether or not the King knew what changes he had "set in motion" by establishing the IER and accepting the recommendations. Moudden responded that the King is the seventeenth ruler in the Alaouite Dynasty (NB: The dynasty began in 1666.), and the King desires to preserve the dynasty and knows the only way to accomplish this is through a process of democratization. Moudden was positive about the changes precipitated by the King's acceptance of the IER's recommendations. He noted as a professor at Mohammed V University in Rabat he feels that he has more academic freedom than he had in the past. At the same time, he recognized that there are those who do not support the changes. These individuals or groups are not, however, voicing their opposition. Moudden identified these individuals as those who benefit from a lack of transparency in the judiciary or have illegal wealth.

Comment

¶10. (SBU) This is the fourth year in a row the NWC has sent a delegation to Morocco. The Moroccans, whether government or NGOs, have been responsive to these visits, and this year was no exception. Between the meetings in Rabat and Casablanca, and a reception for the group hosted by the Ambassador, we hope the delegation left with a full appreciation of the progress and challenges that Morocco is making and faces on the broad range of political, economic, and social issues, and particularly in the area of reform, a recurring topic during the visit.

¶11. (U) The NWC delegation did not have an opportunity to clear this cable.

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